

VZCZCXRO8779  
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHDH RUEHKUK RUEHROV  
DE RUEHLB #0898/01 2221430  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 101430Z AUG 09  
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5503  
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 3520  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 4051  
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 000898

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/FO, NEA/ELA  
ALSO FOR IO A/S BRIMMER  
P FOR DRUSSELL, RRANGASWAMY  
USUN FOR WOLFF/GERMAIN/SCHEDLBAUER  
NSC FOR SHAPIRO, MCDERMOTT  
DOD/OSD FOR FLOURNOY/KAHL/DALTON  
DRL/NESA FOR WHITMAN  
OVP FOR HMUSTAFA  
PARIS FOR JMILLER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/09/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [LE](#)

SUBJECT: MARADA LIEUTENANTS DEFEND MEMBERSHIP IN MARCH 8  
COALITION

REF: BEIRUT 867

Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d).

SUMMARY AND COMMENT

1. (C) The Marada Party's alliance with Hizballah in the March 8 Coalition is based on the premise that the Shia party cannot be disarmed by force and must be dealt with in the context of the root causes that feed it, asserted Marada party figures Raymond (Rony) Arayji and Richard (Richy) Haykal. Reconciliation between Christian party heads is real and will improve the atmosphere in the Maronite community but will not be reflected in shifting political alliances. Marada considers that Maronite Patriarch Mar Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir plays "a negative role" on the political scene, and his political comments demand a political reply. The political and financial benefits for Marada from an alliance with Hizballah are prominent; however, resentment of perceived Israeli aggression against Lebanon and a desire to seek an alternative solution to the Hizballah conundrum are other elements that cement Marada's -- and the FPM's -- relationship with Hizballah. End summary and comment.

LEBANESE-ISRAELI PEACE TREATY A  
MUST BEFORE HIZBALLAH DISARMAMENT

2. (C) The Marada Party's alliance with Hizballah in the March 8 Coalition is based on the premise that the Shia party cannot be disarmed by force and must be dealt with in the context of the root causes that feed it, asserted Marada party figures Raymond (Rony) Arayji and Richard (Richy) Haykal to PolChief on August 6. Arayji and Haykal, who are long-time advisors to Marada party head Suleiman Frangieh, assessed that Hizballah will be a strong domestic political threat after it resolves its "external conflicts" because the party is disciplined, organized, efficient, and transparent. Because of Israeli threats to Lebanon, Marada believes that Hizballah should be disarmed only "the day a peace treaty is signed with Israel." While Marada "understands why Hizballah is a problem for the United States," the party also recognizes that Hizballah represents the oppressed Shia and plays a "freedom fighter" role vis-a-vis Israel. However,

Marada's more immediate goal, they emphasized, is disarming the Palestinian armed groups in the refugee camps. Haykal alleged that Marada has raised this issue with the Syrians only to be told, "No Lebanese parties have asked us to disarm Palestinian groups in the camps," only those carrying weapons outside.

FRANGIEH WILL RECONCILE WITH GEAGEA,  
BUT NOT ALLY WITH HIM  
-----

13. (C) Reconciliation between Christian party heads (reftel) will improve the atmosphere in the Maronite community but will not be reflected by shifting political alliances because the Christian community is "democratic and multi-party." Nevertheless, the reconciliation is real: Frangieh intends to reconcile with Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea -- whom he holds responsible for the murder of his parents and sister -- now that Geagea has assumed the "positive position" that Frangieh asked of him. The Marada leader is allowing this possibility to marinate in the Maronite consciousness before moving forward because "a meeting means nothing without popular support."

PATRIARCH SFEIR PLAYS "A NEGATIVE ROLE"  
-----

14. (C) Despite Marada's willingness to reconcile with the Lebanese Forces, Arayji and Haykal had nothing but bile for Maronite Patriarch Mar Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir, whom they described as playing "a negative role." His political

BEIRUT 00000898 002 OF 002

statements intended to swing voters "threaten Christians in Lebanon" by politicizing the church and engendering a Salafi backlash against Christians as a whole instead of against Christian political movements. Moreover, now that the Patriarch has entered the political fray, his comments demand a political reply no matter the respect that Marada members may have for him in his ecclesiastical role. It is not true, complained the two, that Marada and the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) want to "change the face of Lebanon" (i.e. to create a Hizballah state), as the Patriarch implied on the eve of the June 7 elections. The best evidence of the Christian opposition's dedication to pluralism and democracy is its capturing the votes and confidence nearly 50% of the Christian electorate. The loss of seven to eight percent of the Christian vote after the Patriarch maligned the opposition still stings for the party, and it considers the Patriarch's recent conciliatory statement that the doors of the Church are open to all to be "BS."

COMMENT  
-----

15. (C) Marada, which is a small, regional party historically confined to the northern Zgharta region, has aspirations of becoming a modern, nationwide organization. Although its legislative impact is minimal given that its sole successful parliamentary candidate was party leader Frangieh, its political importance is greater as one of the Christian parties providing political cover to Hizballah. The political and financial benefits for Marada from an alliance with Hizballah are prominent; however, resentment of perceived Israeli aggression against Lebanon and a desire to seek an alternative solution to the Hizballah conundrum are other elements that cement Marada's -- and the FPM's -- relationship with Hizballah. End comment.  
SISON